

prolong my life to a good old age

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/44445289) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/44445289>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	F/M
Fandoms:	Project: Eden's Garden , Dangan Ronpa Series
Relationship:	Wolfgang Akire/Eva Tsunaka
Characters:	Wolfgang Akire , Eva Tsunaka
Additional Tags:	Dancing , Light Angst , Character Study , Vulnerability , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , cause i know i'm gonna get everything wrong lol , Trust Issues , Pre-Partnership , takes place some nebulous significant time between the prologue and the first murder , Slow Dancing
Language:	English
Collections:	Anonymous
Stats:	Published: 2023-01-24 Words: 2,358 Chapters: 1/1

prolong my life to a good old age

by Anonymous

Summary

Wolfgang and Eva share a dance and the horrifying feeling of being known.

Notes

Cringe is dead I want these two to confine and be vulnerable to each other and each other only.

I'm still trying to find my footing re: writing Eva. She's so fascinating to write about and yet so difficult to nail down. I do hope I did her justice.

Title is again from Aesop's the Sheep and the Crow.

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

"What are you going to do after we get out?"

Eva adjusts her glasses, looks up at Wolfgang through the haze of fingerprint smudges and the dim of artificial moonlight, hands in his pocket. It's become routine for them to meet in the simulacrum of a courtyard at night. At first, by happenstance. But the longer they've been held hostage in the academy, the longer she tolerates that blind optimism permeating her classmates, the more frequent their talks have been. Less saccharine and built with the pre-concieved notion of 100% survival, more an actual back-and-forth laden with realistic cause that even Maitsu would be intimidated by.

So to hear him bring something like that up? "I thought you knew better than to assume that."

"My apologies." Wolfgang folds his hands together. Even in the dim, she can still detect a hint of embarrassment, his mouth twisting to a slight grimace. "It's just something that's been on my mind lately. Say that by some coincidence, we get saved before any bloodshed occurs --"

"Highly unlikely." She has no reservations that government-wide searches are underway, less so that they would pinpoint their location in time.

"-it's just a theoretical, Ms. Tsunaka. Just here me out." His hands, she notices, are more animated when he talks to her. Not huge grand gestures like how Monteagao conducts his frivolous ranting, but comparatively expressive to Wolfgang's own static persona. "What would you do afterwards? Surely, your --" she senses his hesitation as he swats it away with a sweeping gesture of his hand. "-- talent would be of use somewhere in the world."

The way he desperately depends on the concept of being an Ultimate anything even after all this time still gives Eva pause. It's as if he believes Ultimates are blessed beings that can do no wrong. Appeal to ignorance or authority, she can't say.

"It doesn't matter. You'll probably never see any of us again, back to buisness as usual." She has a terrible thought about him playing defendant for one his classmates - Monteagao, Amber, Dawson if she's stretching it- but she refrains from telling him. She's in no position to crack wise about anyone, lest she becomes bait via gossip.

Wolfgang probably senses the dismissal in her voice, because he clears his throat, follows up with "Perhaps I've misspoken. My mistake."

Something she's noticed in these solitary moments is the way Wolfgang apologizes. No hint of superiority dressed in humbleness to make himself the better person. She wouldn't call it genuine: just more reflective of his own actions. Small changes as to not escalate the situation further. Admittedly, it's good that he's valuing her words instead of writing them off as silly ramblings.

"I mean, is there anything you missed about the outside world? Friends, family... anything?"

Now this question, it gives her pause. She twists on a strand of her hair, mulling over it before answering. Even with him, it's difficult to disclose any information about herself. She puts partial blame on the killing game, but it feels like a betrayal of her own self, a barrier she can't possibly break. She doesn't want to play into her title, but she wonders if that's another blockade of her reluctance to opening up?

"Of course I miss my loved ones. Why, don't you miss your family?" It's a cheap way to avoid talking about her, but she could at least stall. See how he values his loved ones.

"Ah, well. Yes, I do miss my mother and father dearly." He scratches at his cheek, and Eva notes the odd way of addressing his parents. "But what I missed the most is a little more abstract." He takes a quick scan - checking for passerby students, she assumes- before striding to the gazebo. "Here, let me show you."

Eva follows his movements, then to the gazebo. This seems too obvious for an opportunity kill. She lets herself step on an adjacent bush, the sound of rustling plastic too noticeable even with the ambient noise. Bludgeoning with a weapon is out of the question. Just in case, she decides to double down. "Do you think I'd fall for that?"

Wolfgang laughs, like it's a silly joke instead of a reflection of their reality. "Oh, no, no. You know I wouldn't even consider that. Trust me."

Trust me. There's only so far his brand of naivety can go before it becomes comedic. And yet, she finds herself drawn into his brand of trust. Out of all the people in this academy, she didn't expect to find peace with anyone, let alone someone so blinded in justice, so optimistic in pursuit of something greater. Still, there were far worse alternatives she could be dealing with.

He extends an empty hand, bows down like he's introducing himself to royalty. "I'm a little rusty. I'm only really good at quickstep and rumba, so pardon if I make mistakes."

How funny, she thinks. *Coming from a martyr like him.*

She takes up the challenge, gingerly taking his hand. How smooth it is, nary a vein nor blemish, nor indication of jutting bone. He presses his free hand on her shoulder and she follows suit, her fingernails tap on the metal of his suit. The closeness is foreign, even if the distance is significant. Eva looks up at Wolfgang, their shared gaze lasting a second before he looks down, his hands trembling.

"On my count," he says to their shoes.

One step forward, one step back. A steady rocking before he leads them circling slowly under the gazebo. A quickstep.

It's undeniably odd from an outsider's perspective: two people asynchronously dancing without music, arms as far as they can stretch them out like they're acquaintances forced to pair up for a grade. Wolfgang does start off with a count of 'one, two, one, two' that Eva quietly joins. His steps are either too early or too late. She steps on his shoes, he trips on his. Soon, they find a rhythm that they're both comfortable with and the counting dissolves into

whispers, then nothing as Eva relaxes her arms, his eyes on her eyes and the gap between them is less awkward, yet still lacking in finesse.

Wolfgang tries moving backwards before wobbling, only anchored by Eva digging her heels in the ground. *You're too stiff in your movements*, Eva supplies in her mind. *Watch your step, you almost tripped both of us*, she wants to bark.

"This isn't half bad for a beginner," she says instead.

He chuckles in response, as if to brush off the stumble. "Believe you me, I know a thing or two about dancing. Even took a college class on it for a health credit." He's looking up at the plastered ceiling of the gazebo, perhaps to avoid dwelling on his inelegant steps. "I was far from good, but it was fun. Peaceful. Like all my worries would melted away." He sighs, his smile wide, his steps now clunky. "That's what I missed about the outside world, this kind of peace. Wish I had time to practice again."

She has an idea of where this is heading, the pieces clicking together. "What's stopped you, then?"

He shrugs. Just like that, his smile disappears. "Life happened, I guess. I was passionate about changing the world, my peers said I was good at mitigation, and my parents encouraged me to enter law school early. Continue the legacy, as it were. After that, everything fell on the back burner. No room for any background interests or friends. It was law school, then the bar exam, then everything else."

One, two, his dress shoes almost scuff the whites of her sneakers. His voice, a gradual diminuendo before it blends in with the silence. His steps fall too short, leaving Eva to lead, spinning before she switches the rhythm from quickstep to waltz. One, two, three.

"I had to sacrifice so much to be a lawyer. So much time spent perfecting the craft that I didn't have much time for anything. And now that I'm here..." Left unfinished, he takes control back and pivots, Eva fumbling behind. It's a subtle earnesty, nothing like the flawless beacon of hope he props himself up to be. Unworthy of her to privy a peak into this side of him.

Wolfgang spins her, and she balances on the tip of her shoe, stretches her arm just to keep their hands linked. "Even after all that," she punctuates, "you still love being a lawyer?"

"Yes, I do. I don't regret a thing about it. I worked hard for it, you know." There's no hesitation in his voice, but Eva deliberates on the unspoken pause, squeezes his hand as his eyes cast downward. Of course, this isn't just about dancing. This was never just about dancing. She doesn't press forward - maybe that's left for another time.

"That's okay." Another one-two-three step of their movements, and Eva reflects on his self-restraint. How even this act of opening was closed off. There was the general soft but firm stance Wolfgang's presence commanded in public, befitting the Ultimate Lawyer. And then there's this Wolfgang: scared. Guarded by the veneer of facts and logic. Doubtful in who he is outside the courtroom. Outside of this bubble of each other.

Wolfgang hums something Eva cannot decipher as they rotate around the gazebo. He's closer now, their arms almost linked together but just enough so she doesn't have to confront the sound of his heart. She thinks about how her own conviction of trust breeding murder. She thinks about what he said to her in private, about dying alone with no one there. And she thinks about even after countless conversations together, she still has that nagging feeling of being inauthentic, her difficulty of opening up. Her desire to be known as Eva Tsunaka and nothing else. Not a villain, not the Ultimate Liar, not a symbol to be targeted. Not forgotten as a person. Perhaps, he feels the same way. Poor, perfect prosecutor Wolfgang Akire, no breathing room between profession and personal life.

Her own hypocrisy. The irony isn't lost on her.

But, she can't explain it. How else would this be read - opening just enough for sympathy, not enough to confront them head on? If he wanted to kill her so badly, he'd be open with everything from the start. His sympathetic sob story he can fall back on. His reluctance speaks more than whatever explanation he has for his upbringing.

The invisible question hangs between them, *what about you, Ms. Tsunaka? Who do you miss the most?* and she wants to be okay handling her trust to him. She rests her forehead on his shoulder, his hand losing grip before she squeezes back, trying to ignore his heartbeat. *Now or never*, she decides as she attempts.

"Poe."

"Hmm?"

"I have a magpie named Poe." She mumbles into his shoulder, aims her focus on the sheep in his lapel. "Had him for a few years. He's been a good companion. I couldn't bring him to the academy, so I had someone else take care of him for now." Her eyes aren't glossy, but the stinging is apparent. She takes a breath in. "He's in good hands."

"You miss him, do you." Not a question, but a statement.

She doesn't respond. Just nods. She thinks of the possibility of her death. Of Poe perpetually waiting for a return that will never happen. Of Poe forgetting her if she does survive. Will she be remembered? She bites at the inside of her cheek just to forget.

A beat of silence. Then. "Thank you," he whispers into her hair, "for telling me."

The realization is instant. She tilts her head back up, looks back at his. "...I didn't even answer your question." Even with her hesitation, she knows fully well that Poe didn't hold a candle to Wolfgang's issues. Nonetheless, she's featherweight.

"It doesn't matter. You've seen me. And I see you as well." He lowers his head, his breath tickling her ear. "And I'm glad that I can trust you with this."

The speaker boosted buzz of fireflies fills the silence between them, and Eva tightens her grip despite clammy palms. They stay swaying in this position, Wolfgang's tuneless humming

worming through Eva's head, a message so strong in his dedication, in his stubborn adherence to her. To trust him with this version of herself is to know she'll be okay.

So she tilts on the heels of her sneakers, leans backwards, and drops.

"Christ, Ms. Tsunaka!" He outstretches his arms and instantly, her head's hovering mere inches from the floor, her hair curtained by dust and grass. She feels his hands tremble on the nape of her neck, on the small of her back, and his eyes - worried, guilty - bear onto her. It shakes her to her core, how gentle and stable his presence is, even with a fall so telegraphed. "Warn me next time," he admonishes, yet his voice simmers back to a comfortable quiet, "you could have hurt yourself."

His sincerity reverberates in her mind, her heart pulses, and here, she's made the right choice.

"Just wanted to make sure," she says. One hand behind his neck, a hand on his shoulder, and she slowly guides him, rises both of them upright again, separated just enough so as to avoid her hammering heartbeat over his. The shock in his face dissolves into one of wonder, his mouth agape. Does he know just how much she understands? "You're right," she states, her voice light as she brushes a thumb across the curve of his neck. "You should take up dancing again."

Her own way of saying, *I see you too. And I trust you.*

There's a stutter, a hitch, followed by a "Ah, yes. I might. After we get out of here, of course," as Wolfgang looks away, the warmth on her neck lingering as his hand obscures his jaw, his stray laugh. All violet shadows and moonlight highlights, muted by the hint of red spreading on his face.

It's satisfying enough for her to ignore her own face heating up.

End Notes

i think about how everyone was ready to turn against eva due to her talent and how everyone appreciates wolfgang's talent as useful and worships him and how she's the one who brought up the problems with blind belief and how both are putting fronts for their designated roles and i think "holy shit. HOLY SHIT."

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